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ILLUSTRATIONS

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William Blake

THE
GRAVE,
A Poem.

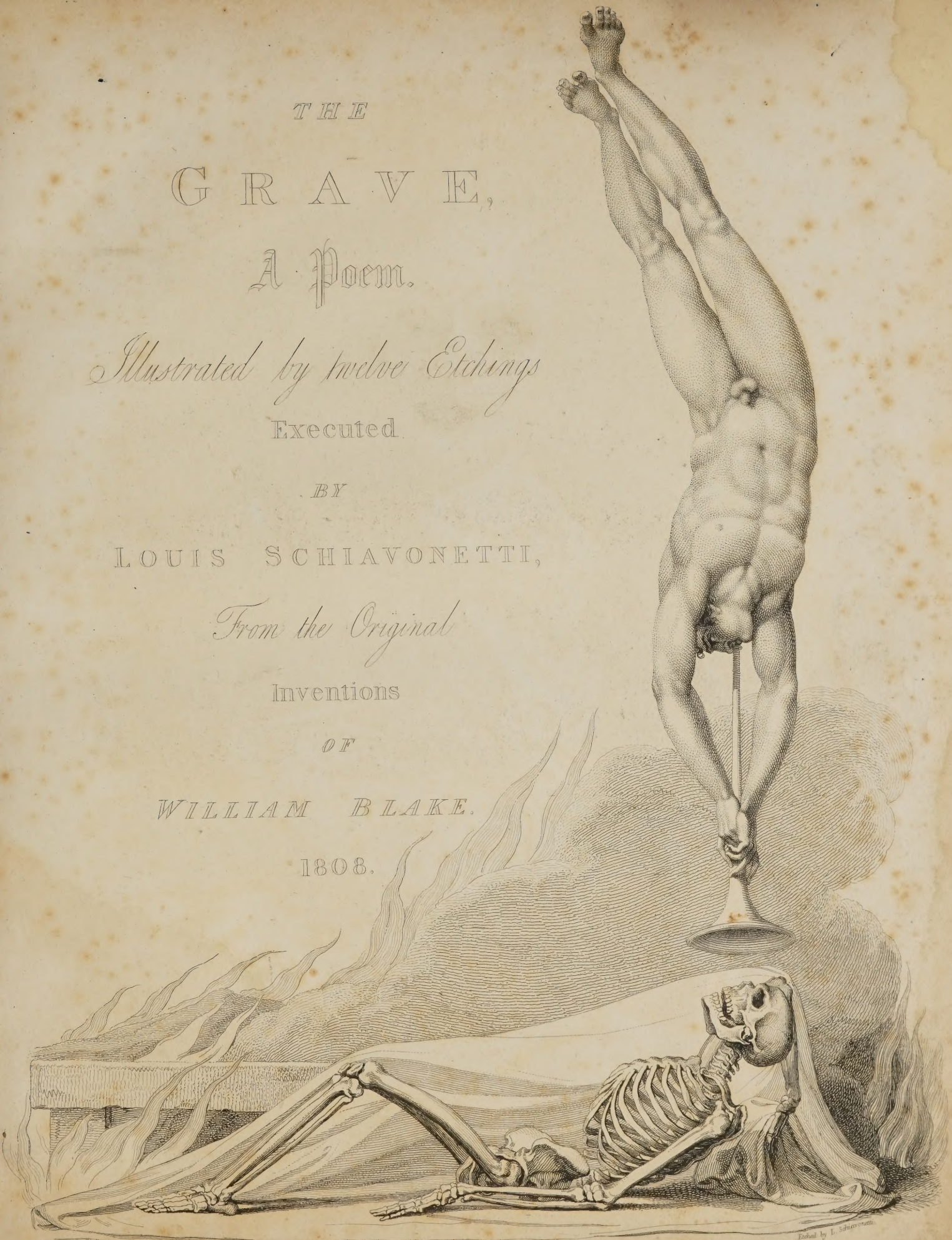
Illustrated by twelve Etchings
Executed


BY
LOUIS SCHIAVONETTI,

From the Original
Inventions

OF
WILLIAM BLAKE.

1808.





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THE
G R A V E,
A POEM.

BY
ROBERT BLAIR.

ILLUSTRATED BY
Twelve Etchings
EXECUTED FROM
ORIGINAL DESIGNS.

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1808.

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THERE IS A CALM FOR THOSE WHO WEEP,
A REST FOR WEARY PILGRIMS FOUND:
THEY SOFTLY LIE AND SWEETLY SLEEP
LOW IN THE GROUND.

THE STORM THAT WRECKS THE WINTER SKY
NO MORE DISTURBS THEIR DEEP REPOSE
THAN SUMMER EVENING'S LATEST SIGH
THAT SHUTS THE ROSE.

MONTGOMERY.

TO
THE QUEEN.

THE Door of Death is made of Gold,
That Mortal Eyes cannot behold;
But, when the Mortal Eyes are clos'd,
And cold and pale the Limbs repos'd,
The Soul awakes; and, wond'ring, sees
In her mild Hand the golden Keys:
The Grave is Heaven's golden Gate,
And rich and poor around it wait;
O Shepherdess of England's Fold,
Behold this Gate of Pearl and Gold!

To dedicate to England's Queen
The Visions that my Soul has seen,
And, by Her kind permission, bring
What I have borne on solemn Wing,
From the vast regions of the Grave,
Before Her Throne my Wings I wave;
Bowing before my Sov'reign's Feet,
"The Grave produc'd these Blossoms sweet
"In mild repose from Earthly strife;
"The Blossoms of Eternal Life!"

WILLIAM BLAKE.

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To the elegant and classical taste of Mr. FUSELI he is indebted for excellent remarks on the moral worth and picturesque dignity of the Designs that accompany this Poem. Mr. PHILIPS is entitled to his kindest thanks, for the capitally painted Portrait of Mr. WILLIAM BLAKE, which is here presented to the Subscribers; and to Mr. SCHIAVONETTI he is under still greater obligations for a SERIES OF ETCHINGS which, it is not too much praise to say, no other artist could have executed so ably.

That he might know how far he was warranted in calling the attention of the connoisseur to what he himself imagined to be a high and original effort of genius, the Proprietor submitted the Drawings, before they were engraved, to the following gentlemen, members of the Royal Academy of Painting, in London. He would esteem himself culpable

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London, July 1808.

THE moral series here submitted to the Public, from its object and method of execution, has a double claim on general attention.

In an age of equal refinement and corruption of manners, when systems of education and seduction go hand in hand; when religion itself compounds with fashion; when in the pursuit of present enjoyment, all consideration of futurity vanishes, and the real object of life is lost—in such an age, every exertion confers a benefit on society which tends to impress man with his destiny, to hold the mirror up to life, less indeed to discriminate its characters, than those situations which shew what all are born for, what all ought to act for, and what all must inevitably come to.

The importance of this object has been so well understood at every period of time, from the earliest and most innocent, to the latest and most depraved, that reason and fancy have exhausted their stores of argument and imagery, to impress it on the mind: animate and inanimate nature, the seasons, the forest and the field, the bee and ant, the larva, chrysalis and moth, have lent their real or supposed analogies with the origin, pursuits, and end, of the human race, so often to emblematic purposes, that instruction is become stale, and attention callous. The serpent with its tail in its mouth, from a type of eternity, is become an infant's bauble; even the nobler idea of Hercules pausing between virtue and vice, or the varied imagery of Death leading his patients to the grave, owe their effect upon us more to technic excellence than allegoric utility.

Aware of this, but conscious that affectation of originality and trite repetition would equally impede his success, the author of the moral series before us, has endeavoured to wake sensibility by touching our

sympathies with nearer, less ambiguous, and less ludicrous imagery, than what mythology, Gothic superstition, or symbols as far-fetched as inadequate, could supply. His invention has been chiefly employed to spread a familiar and domestic atmosphere round the most important of all subjects, to connect the visible and the invisible world; without provoking probability, and to lead the eye from the milder light of time to the radiations of eternity.

Such is the plan and the moral part of the author's invention; the technic part, and the execution of the artist, though to be examined by other principles, and addressed to a narrower circle, equally claim approbation, sometimes excite our wonder, and not seldom our fears, when we see him play on the very verge of legitimate invention; but wildness so picturesque in itself, so often redeemed by taste, simplicity, and elegance, what child of fancy, what artist would wish to discharge? The groups and single figures on their own basis, abstracted from the general composition, and considered without attention to the plan, frequently exhibit those genuine and unaffected attitudes, those simple graces which nature and the heart alone can dictate, and only an eye inspired by both, discover. Every class of artists, in every stage of their progress or attainments, from the student to the finished master, and from the contriver of ornament, to the painter of history, will find here materials of art and hints of improvement!

HENRY FUSELI.



Dr. Wm. W. Plate

Engraved by J. Schraagenet

Christ descending into the Grave

*Eternal King! whose potent Arm sustains
The Keys of Hell and Death.*

London Published May 1st 1848 by Cadell & Pears, St. Pauls

THE GRAVE.

WHILST some affect the sun, and some the shade,
Some flee the city, some the hermitage;
Their aims as various as the roads they take
In journeying through life; the task be mine
To paint the gloomy horrors of the *tomb*;
Th' appointed place of rendezvous, where all
These trav'lers meet. Thy succours I implore,
Eternal King! whose potent arm sustains
The keys of hell and death. The Grave, dread thing!
Men shiver when thou'rt nam'd: nature appall'd
Shakes off her wonted firmness. Ah! how dark
Thy long-extended realms, and rueful wastes,
Where nought but silence reigns, and night, dark night,
Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound! The sickly taper,
By glimm'ring through thy low-brow'd misty vaults,
Furr'd round with mouldy damp and ropy slime,

Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
And only serves to make thy night more irksome!
Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
Cheerless, unsocial plant! that loves to dwell
'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms;
Where light-heel'd ghosts and visionary shades,
Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
Embodied thick, perform their mystic rounds.
No other merriment, dull tree! is thine.

See yonder hallow'd fane! the pious work
Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
And buried 'midst the wreck of things which were:
There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.
The wind is up: hark—how it howls! Methinks
Till now I never heard a sound so dreary.
Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
Rook'd in the spire, screams loud! The gloomy ailes,
Black plaister'd, and hung round with shreds of scutcheons
And tatter'd coats of arms, send back the sound,
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead! Rous'd from their slumbers,
In grim array the grizly spectres rise,
Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen
Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night!

THE GRAVE.

3

Again the screech owl shrieks—ungracious sound!
I'll hear no more; it makes one's blood run chill.

Quite round the pile, a row of rev'rend elms,
Coeval near with that, all ragged shew,
Long lash'd by the rude winds; some rift half down
Their branchless trunks, others so thin a-top
That scarce two crows could lodge in the same tree.
Strange things, the neighbours say, have happen'd here.
Wild shrieks have issu'd from the hollow tombs;
Dead men have come again, and walk'd about;
And the great bell has toll'd, unrun, untouch'd!
Such tales their cheer, at wake or gossiping,
When it draws near the witching-time of night.

Oft in the lone church-yard at night I've seen,
By glimpse of moon-shine, chequ'ring through the trees,
The school-boy, with his satchel in his hand,
Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones
(With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown)
That tell in homely phrase who lie below.
Sudden he starts! and hears, or thinks he hears,
The sound of something purring at his heels.
Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,

THE GRAVE.

Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows;
Who gather round, and wonder at the tale
Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly,
That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand
O'er some new open'd grave; and, strange to tell,
Evanishes at crowing of the cock!

The new-made widow too I've sometimes spied,
(Sad sight!) slow moving o'er the prostrate dead:
Listless she crawls along in doleful black,
While bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,
Fast falling down her now untasted cheek.
Prone on the lowly grave of the dear man
She drops; while busy meddling memory,
In barbarous succession, musters up
The past endearments of their softer hours,
Tenacious of it's theme. Still, still she thinks
She sees him, and, indulging the fond thought,
Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

Invidious Grave! how dost thou rend in sunder
Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one!
A tie more stubborn far than nature's band.
Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!

THE GRAVE.

5

Sweet'ner of life! and solder of society!
I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.
Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
And the warm efforts of the gentle heart,
Anxious to please. O! when my friend and I
In some thick wood have wander'd heedless on,
Hid from the vulgar eye; and sat us down
Upon the sloping cowslip-cover'd bank,
Where the pure limpid stream has slid along
In grateful errors through the under-wood,
Sweet murm'ring; methought the shrill-tongu'd thrush
Mended his song of love; the sooty blackbird
Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd every note;
The eglantine smell'd sweeter, and the rose
Assum'd a die more deep; whilst every flower
Vied with its fellow plant in luxury
Of dress. O! then the longest summer's day
Seem'd too, too much in haste; still the full heart
Had not imparted half: 'twas happiness
Too exquisite to last! Of joys departed,
Not to return, how painful the remembrance!

Dull Grave! thou spoil'st the dance of youthful blood,
Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of mirth,

And every smirking feature from the face;
Branding our laughter with the name of madness.
Where are the jesters now? the men of health
Complexionally pleasant? Where the droll,
Whose very look and gesture was a joke
To clapping theatres and shouting crowds,
And made e'en thick-lipp'd musing Melancholy
To gather up her face into a smile
Before she was aware? Ah! sullen now,
And dumb as the green turf that covers them!

Where are the mighty thunderbolts of war,
The Roman Cæsars and the Grecian chiefs,
The boast of story? Where the hot-brain'd youth,
Who the tiara at his pleasure tore
From kings of all the then discover'd globe;
And cried, forsooth, because his arm was hamper'd,
And had not room enough to do it's work?
Alas, how slim—dishonourably slim!—
And cramm'd into a space we blush to name—
Proud royalty! How alter'd in thy looks!
How blank thy features, and how wan thy hue!
Son of the morning! whither art thou gone?
Where hast thou hid thy many-spangled head,
And the majestic menace of thine eyes,

THE GRAVE.

7

Felt from afar? Pliant and pow'rless now:
Like new-born infant wound up in his swathes,
Or victim tumbled flat upon his back,
That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife;
Mute must thou bear the strife of little tongues,
And coward insults of the base-born crowd,
That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,
But only hop'd for in the peaceful Grave—
Of being unmolested and alone!
Arabia's gums and odoriferous drugs,
And honours by the herald duly paid
In mode and form, e'en to a very scruple;
(O cruel irony!) these come too late;
And only mock whom they were meant to honour!
Surely there's not a dungeon slave that's buried
In the highway, unshrouded and uncoffin'd,
But lies as soft, and sleeps as sound, as he.
Sorry pre-eminence of high descent
Above the baser born, to rot in state!

But see! the well-plum'd hearse comes nodding on,
Stately and slow; and properly attended
By the whole sable tribe, that painful watch
The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,

THE GRAVE.

By letting out their persons by the hour
To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad!
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd
And glitt'ring in the sun! Triumphant entries
Of conquerors and coronation pomps
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard th' unwieldy show; whilst from the casements
And houses'-tops, ranks behind ranks, close wedg'd,
Hang bellying o'er. But tell us, why this waste?
Why this ado in earthing up a carcase
That's fall'n into disgrace, and in the nostril
Smells horrible? Ye undertakers! tell us,
'Midst all the gorgeous figures you exhibit,
Why is the principal conceal'd for which
You make this mighty stir? 'Tis wisely done;
What would offend the eye in a good picture,
The painter casts discreetly into shades.

Proud lineage! now how little thou appear'st!
Below the envy of the private man!
Honour, that meddlesome officious ill,
Pursues thee e'en to death! nor there stops short.
Strange persecution! when the Grave itself
Is no protection from rude sufferance.



Drawn by W. Blake

Engraved by L. Schiavonetti

The meeting of a Family in Heaven

London, Published May 1st 1808 by Cadell & Davies Strand

THE GRAVE.

9

Absurd! to think to overreach the Grave;
And from the wreck of names to rescue ours!
The best concerted schemes men lay for fame
Die fast away; only themselves die faster.
The far-fam'd sculptor, and the laurell'd bard,
These bold insurers of deathless fame,
Supply their little feeble aids in vain.
The tap'ring pyramid, th' Egyptian's pride,
And wonder of the world! whose spiky top
Has wounded the thick cloud; and long outliv'd
The angry shaking of the winter's storm;
Yet, spent at last by th' injuries of Heaven,
Shatter'd with age, and furrow'd o'er with years,
The mystic cone, with hieroglyphics crusted,
At once gives way. O lamentable sight!
The labour of whole ages lumbers down,
A hideous and mis-shapen length of ruins!
Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
With all-subduing Time: her cank'ring hand
With calm deliberate malice wasteth them.
Worn on the edge of days, the brass consumes,
The busto moulders, and the deep cut marble,
Unsteady to the steel, gives up it's charge!
Ambition, half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down the head, and reddens at the tale!

Here all the mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sov'reign rule through seas of blood;
Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains,
Who ravag'd kingdoms, and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of power
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
To want the rest; now, like a storm that's spent,
Lie hush'd, and meanly sneak behind the covert.
Vain thought! to hide them from the general scorn,
That haunts and dogs them like an injur'd ghost
Implacable! Here too the petty tyrant,
Whose scant domains geographer ne'er notic'd,
And, well for neighb'ring grounds, of arm as short;
Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
And grip'd them like some lordly beast of prey,
Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
And piteous plaintive voice of misery
(As if a slave were not a shred of nature,
Of the same common nature with his lord);
Now tame and humble, like a child that's whipp'd,
Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his kinsman!
Nor pleads his rank and birthright. Under ground
Precedency's a jest; vassal and lord,
Grossly familiar, side by side consume!



The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother & Child, in the Tomb.

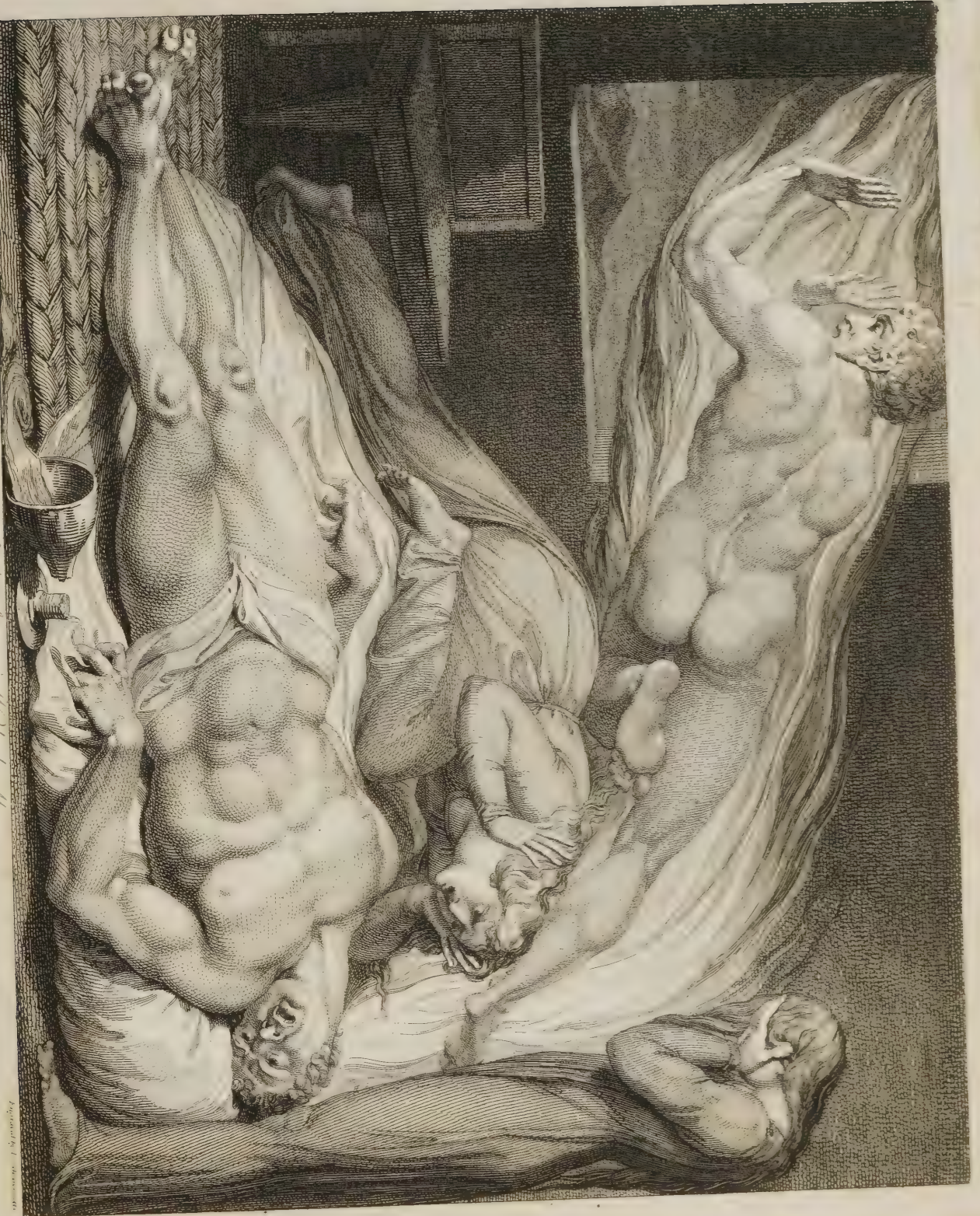
Engraving published by Messrs. G. & J. Colburn, 1840.

THE GRAVE.

11

When self-esteem, or other's adulation,
Would cunningly persuade us we were something
Above the common level of our kind,
The Grave gainsays the smooth-complexion'd flatt'ry,
And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.
Beauty! thou pretty plaything! dear deceit!
That steals so softly o'er the stripling's heart,
And gives it a new pulse unknown before!
The Grave discredits thee. Thy charms expung'd,
Thy roses faded, and thy lilies soil'd,
What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee homage?
Methinks I see thee with thy head low laid;
Whilst, surfeited upon thy damask cheek,
The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
Riots unscar'd. For this was all thy caution?
For this thy painful labours at thy glass,
To improve those charms, and keep them in repair,
For which the spoiler thanks thee not? Foul feeder!
Coarse fare and carrion please thee full as well,
And leave as keen a relish on the sense.
Look, how the fair one weeps! The conscious tears
Stand thick as dew-drops on the bells of flowers:
Honest effusion! The swoln heart in vain
Works hard to put a gloss on it's distress.

Strength too! thou surly, and less gentle boast
Of those that loud laugh at the village ring!
A fit of common sickness pulls thee down
With greater ease than e'er thou didst the stripling
That rashly dar'd thee to th' unequal fight.
What groan was that I heard? Deep groan indeed,
With anguish heavy laden! let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm belabour'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play! What now avail
The strong-built sinewy limbs, and well spread shoulders?
See, how he tugs for life, and lays about him,
Mad with his pain! Eager he catches hold
Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard,
Just like a creature drowning! Hideous sight!
O how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
While the distemper's rank and deadly venom
Shoots like a burning arrow 'cross his bowels,
And drinks his marrow up. Heard you that groan!
It was his last. See how the great Goliah,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still! What mean'st thou then, O mighty boaster,
To vaunt of nerves of thine? What means the bull,



Drawn by J. G. Smith.

Death of the Strong Wicked Man

It was his last
Heard you that groan?

Engraved by J. G. Smith.

Unconscious of his strength, to play the coward,
And flee before a feeble thing like man;
That, knowing well the slackness of his arm,
Trusts only in the well-invented knife?

With study pale, and midnight vigils spent,
The star-surveying sage close to his eye
Applies the sight-invigorating tube;
And, trav'ling through the boundless length of space,
Marks well the courses of the far-seen orbs,
That roll with regular confusion there,
In ecstasy of thought. - But ah! proud man!
Great heights are hazardous to the weak head:
Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails,
And down thou dropp'st into that darksome place
Where nor device nor knowledge ever came.

Here the tongue-warrior lies! disabled now,
Disarm'd, dishonour'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
And cannot tell his ails to passers-by!
Great man of language! whence this mighty change,
This dumb despair, and drooping of the head?
Though strong Persuasion hung upon thy lip,
And sly Insinuation's softer arts
In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue,

Alas, how chop-fall'n now! thick mists and silence
Rest, like a weary cloud, upon thy breast
Unceasing. Ah! where is the lifted arm,
The strength of action, and the force of words,
The well-turn'd period, and the well-tun'd voice,
With all the lesser ornaments of phrase?
Ah! fled for ever, as they ne'er had been!
Raz'd from the book of fame; or, more provoking,
Perchance some hackney hunger-bitten scribbler
Insults thy memory, and blots thy tomb
With long flat narrative, or duller rhimes,
With heavy halting pace that drawl along—
Enough to rouse a dead man into rage,
And warm, with red resentment, the wan cheek!

Here the great masters of the healing art,
These mighty mock-defrauders of the tomb,
Spite of their juleps and catholicons,
Resign to fate! Proud Æsculapius' son,
Where are thy boasted implements of art,
And all thy well-cramm'd magazines of health?
Nor hill, nor vale, as far as ship could go,
Nor margin of the gravel-bottom'd brook,
Escap'd thy rifling hand! From stubborn shrubs
Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,

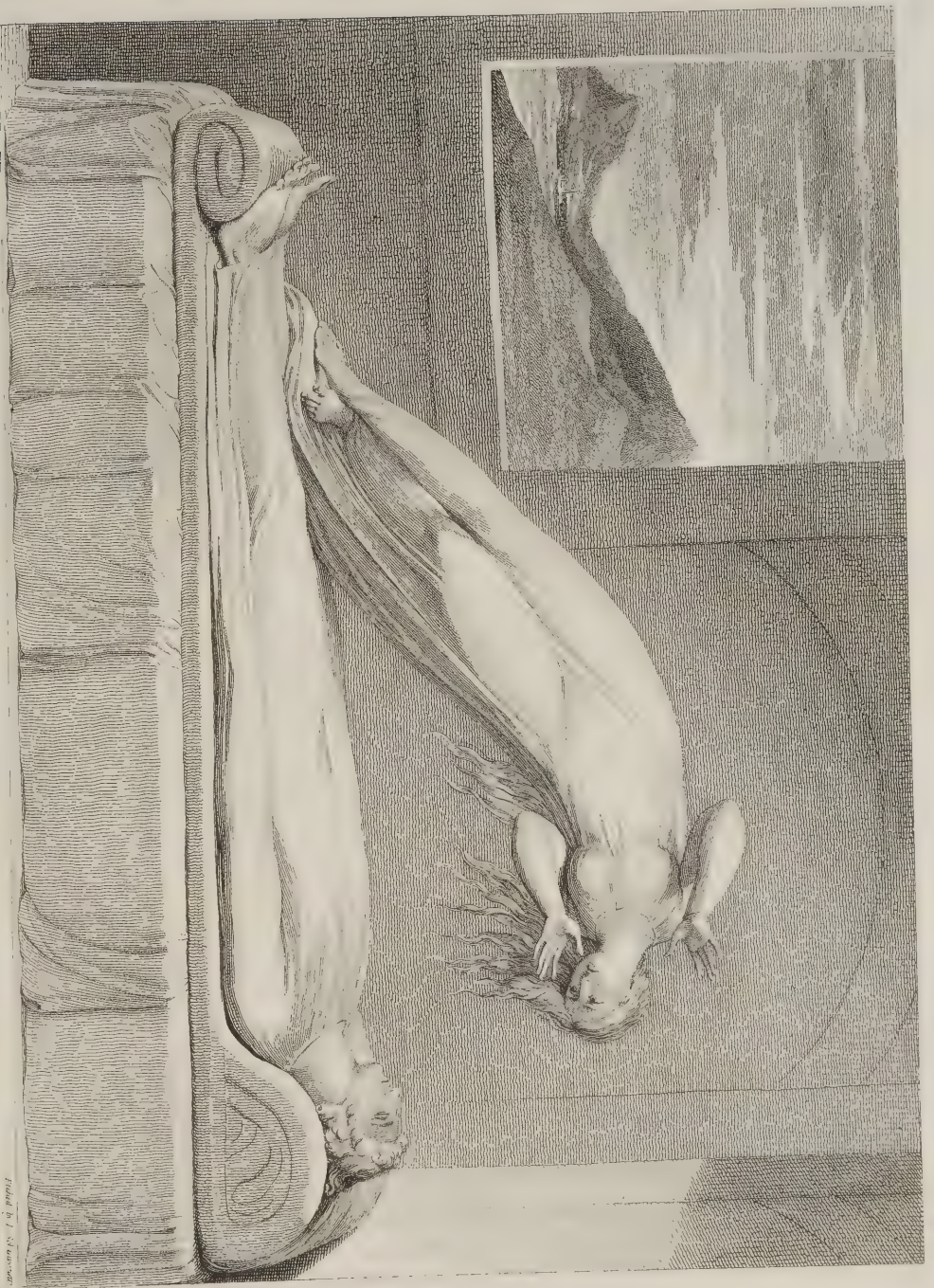
And vex'd them in the fire. Nor fly, nor insect,
Nor writhy snake, escap'd thy deep research!
But why this apparatus? why this cost?
Tell us, thou doughty keeper from the grave,
Where are thy recipes and cordials now,
With the long list of vouchers for thy cures?
Alas, thou speak'st not. The bold impostor
Looks not more silly when the cheat's found out.

Here the lank-sided miser, worst of felons,
Who meanly stole (discreditable shift,)
From back and belly too their proper cheer,
Eas'd of a tax it irk'd the wretch to pay
To his own carcase, now lies cheaply lodg'd,
By clam'rous appetites no longer teas'd,
Nor tedious bills of charges and repairs.
But ah, where are his rents, his comings in?
Aye, now you've made the rich man poor indeed!
Robb'd of his gods, what has he left behind?
O cursed lust of gold, when for thy sake
The fool throws up his interest in both worlds,
First starv'd in this, then damn'd in that to come!

How shocking must thy summons be, O Death,
To him that is at ease in his possessions,

Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnish'd for that world to come!
In that dread moment how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
O might she stay to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage! mournful sight!
Her very eyes weep blood, and every groan
She heaves is big with horror! But the foe,
Like a stanch murd'rer steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on;
Till, forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin!

Sure 'tis a serious thing to die! My soul,
What a strange moment must it be when, near
Thy journey's end, thou hast the gulph in view!
That awful gulph no mortal e'er repass'd
To tell what's doing on the other side!
Nature runs back and shudders at the sight,
And every life-string bleeds at thoughts of parting!



The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life

*How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!*

London: Published May 1. 1808. by Cadell & Davies, Strand

For part they must—body and soul must part!
Fond couple! link'd more close than wedded pair.
This wings it's way to it's Almighty Source,
The witness of it's actions, now it's judge;
That drops into the dark and noisome grave,
Like a disabled pitcher of no use.

If death were nothing, and nought after death;
If when men died at once they ceas'd to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing,
Whence first they sprung; then might the debauchee
Untrembling mouth the Heavens; then might the drunkard
Reel over his full bowl, and when 'tis drain'd
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bugbear Death; then might the wretch
That's weary of the world, and tir'd of life,
At once give each inquietude the slip,
By stealing out of being when he pleas'd,
And by what way, whether by hemp or steel:—
Death's thousand doors stand open. Who could force
The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,
Or blame him if he goes? Sure he does well
That helps himself as timely as he can,
When able. But, if there's an *hereafter*—
And that there is, conscience, uninfluenc'd

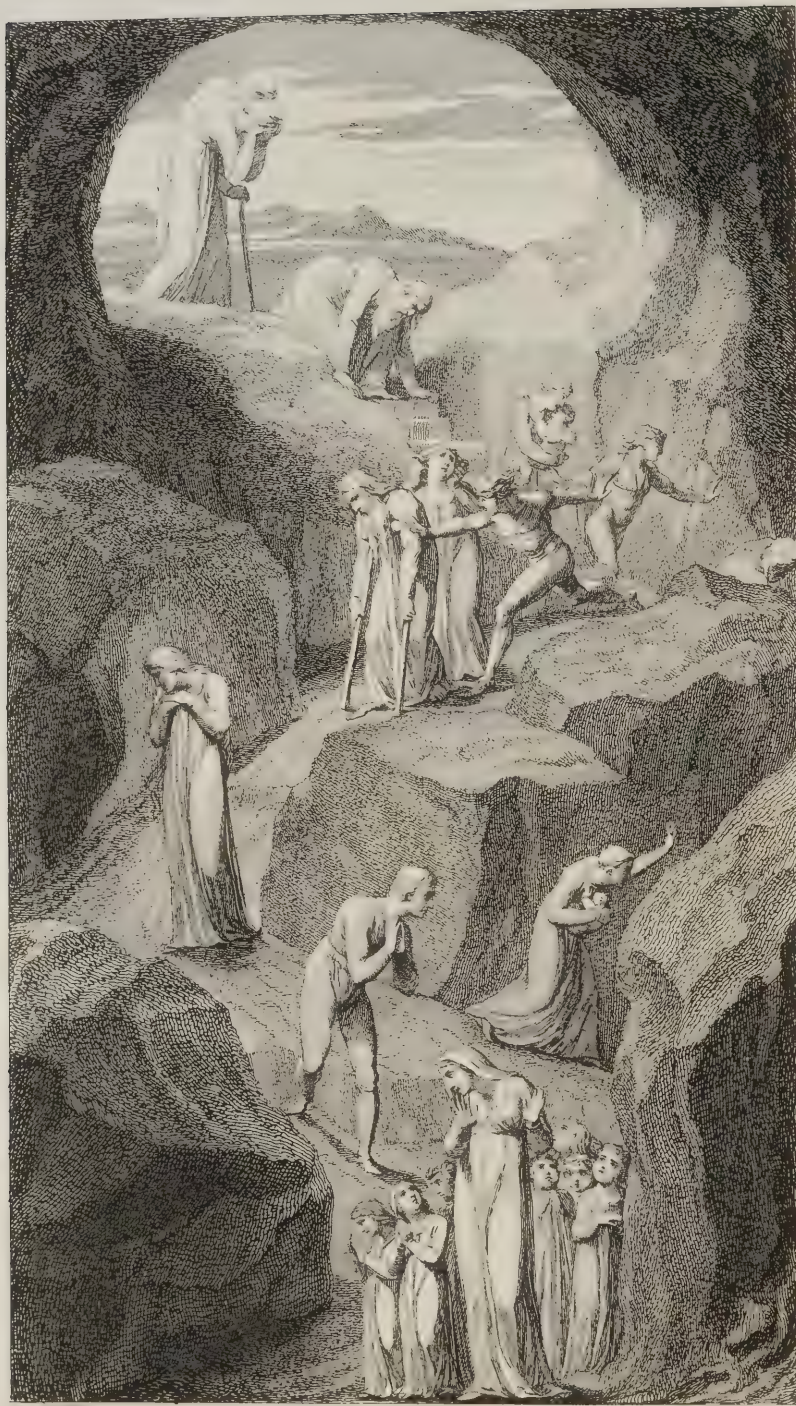
And suffer'd to speak out, tells every man—
Then must it be an awful thing to die;
More horrid yet to die by one's own hand!
Self-murder! Name it not; our island's shame;
That makes her the reproach of neighb'ring states.
Shall nature, swerving from her earliest dictate,
Self-preservation, fall by her own act?
Forbid it, Heaven! Let not, upon disgust,
The shameless hand be fully crimson'd o'er
With blood of its own lord! Dreadful attempt,
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage
To rush into the presence of our Judge!
As if we challeng'd him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath. Unheard-of tortures
Must be reserv'd for such: these herd together;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.
Our time is fix'd, and all our days are number'd!
How long, how short, we know not: this we know,
Duty requires we calmly wait the summons,
Nor dare to stir till Heaven shall give permission:
Like sentries that must keep their destin'd stand,
And wait th' appointed hour till they're reliev'd.
Those only are the brave that keep their ground,

And keep it to the last. To run away
Is but a coward's trick: to run away
From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves
By boldly vent'ring on a world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark—'tis mad!
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

Tell us, ye dead! will none of you in pity
To those you left behind disclose the secret?
O! that some courteous ghost would blab it out
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarn'd men of their death. 'Twas kindly done
To knock and give th' alarm. But what means
This stinted charity? 'Tis but lame kindness
That does it's work by halves. Why might you not
Tell us what 'tis to die? Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice? I'll ask no more.
Sullen, like lamps in sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves. Well—'tis no matter:
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are, and as close.

Death's shafts fly thick. Here falls the village swain,
And there his pamper'd lord! The cup goes round,
And who so artful as to put it by?
'Tis long since death had the majority,
Yet, strange, the living lay it not to heart!
See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton, hoary-headed chronicle!
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear; with mattock in his hand
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance,
By far his juniors! Scarce a scull's cast up
But well he knew it's owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life. Thus hand in hand
The sot has walk'd with Death twice twenty years;
And yet ne'er younker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale: when drunkards meet,
None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand
More willing to his cup. Poor wretch! he minds not
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

On this side, and on that, men see their friends
Drop off, like leaves in Autumn; yet launch out
Into fantastic schemes, which the long livers
In the world's hale and undegenerate days



The descent of Man into the Vale of Death.

'Tis here all meet'

Adapted from Milton's Paradise Lost by Collett & Davies, Strand

Could scarce have leisure for; fools that we are!
Never to think of Death and of ourselves
At the same time!—as if to learn to die
Were no concern of our's. O more than sottish!
For creatures of a day in gamesome mood
To frolic on eternity's dread brink,
Unapprehensive; when, for aught we know,
The very first swoln surge shall sweep us in!
Think we, or think we not, time hurries on
With a resistless unremitting stream,
Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight thief,
That slides his hand under the miser's pillow,
And carries off his prize. What is this world?
What but a spacious burial-field unwall'd,
Strew'd with Death's spoils, the spoils of animals
Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones!
The very turf on which we tread once liv'd;
And we that live must lend our carcasses
To cover our own offspring: in their turns
They too must cover their's. 'Tis here all meet!
The shiv'ring Iceland and sun-burnt Moor;
Men of all climes, that never met before,
And of all creeds, the Jew, the Turk, the Christian.
Here the proud prince, and favourite yet prouder,
His sov'reign's keeper, and the people's scourge,

Are huddled out of sight! Here lie abash'd
The great negociators of the earth,
And celebrated masters of the balance,
Deep read in stratagems and wiles of courts.
Now vain their treaty-skill; Death scorns to treat.
Here the o'erloaded slave flings down his burden
From his gall'd shoulders; and, when the stern tyrant,
With all his guards and tools of power about him,
Is meditating new unheard-of hardships,
Mocks his short arm, and quick as thought escapes,
Where tyrants vex not, and the weary rest.
Here the warm lover, leaving the cool shade,
The tell-tale echo, and the babbling stream,
Time out of mind the fav'rite seats of love,
Fast by his gentle mistress lays him down,
Unblasted by foul tongue. Here friends and foes
Lie close, unmindful of their former feuds.
The lawn-rob'd prelate and plain presbyter,
Erewhile that stood aloof, as shy to meet,
Familiar mingle here, like sister-streams
That some rude interposing rock has split.
Here is the large-limb'd peasant; here the child
Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch.
Here is the mother with her sons and daughters;

THE GRAVE.

23

The barren wife; and long-demurring maid,
Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand.
Here are the prude severe, and gay coquette,
The sober widow, and the young green virgin,
Cropp'd like a rose before 'tis fully blown,
Or half it's worth disclos'd. Strange medley here!
Here garrulous old age winds up his tale;
And jovial youth, of lightsome vacant heart,
Whose every day was made of melody,
Hears not the voice of mirth; the shrill-tongu'd shrew,
Meek as the turtle-dove, forgets her chiding.
Here are the wise, the generous, and the brave;
The just, the good, the worthless, and profane;
The downright clown, and perfectly well-bred;
The fool, the churl, the scoundrel, and the mean;
The supple statesman, and the patriot stern;
The wrecks of nations and the spoils of time,
With all the lumber of six thousand years!

Poor man! how happy once in thy first state,
When yet but warm from thy great Maker's hand
He stamp'd thee with his image, and well pleas'd,
Smil'd on his last fair work! Then all was well.

Sound was the body, and the soul serene;
Like two sweet instruments, ne'er out of tune,
That play their several parts. Nor head nor heart
Offer'd to ache; nor was there cause they should,
For all was pure within. No fell remorse,
Nor anxious castings up of what might be,
Alarm'd his peaceful bosom. Summer seas
Shew not more smooth when kiss'd by southern winds,
Just ready to expire. Scarce importun'd,
The generous soil with a luxurious hand
Offer'd the various produce of the year,
And every thing most perfect in it's kind.
Blessed, thrice blessed days! But ah, how short!
Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men;
But fugitive, like those, and quickly gone.
O slipp'ry state of things! What sudden turns,
What strange vicissitudes, in the first leaf
Of man's sad history! To-day most happy,
And ere to-morrow's sun has set most abject!
How scant the space between these vast extremes!
Thus far'd it with our sire; not long h' enjoy'd
His Paradise! Scarce had the happy tenant
Of the fair spot due time to prove its sweets,
Or sum them up, when straight he must be gone,
Ne'er to return again! And must he go?

Can nought compound for the first dire offence
Of erring man? Like one that is condemn'd,
Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,
And parley with his fate. But 'tis in vain.
Not all the lavish odours of the place,
Offer'd in incense, can procure his pardon,
Or mitigate his doom. A mighty angel
With flaming sword forbids his longer stay,
And drives the loit'rer forth; nor must he take
One last and farewell round. At once he lost
His glory and his God! If mortal now,
And sorely maim'd, no wonder—Man has sinn'd!
Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,
Evil he would needs try; nor tried in vain.
Dreadful experiment—destructive measure—
Where the worst thing could happen, is success!
Alas! too well he sped; the good he scorn'd
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-us'd ghost,
Not to return; or, if it did, it's visits,
Like those of angels, short, and far between:
Whilst the black demon, with his hell-scaped train,
Admitted once into it's better room,
Grew loud and mutinous, nor would be gone;
Lording it o'er the man, who now too late
Saw the rash error which he could not mend;

An error fatal not to him alone,
But to his future sons, his fortune's heirs.
Inglorious bondage! human nature groans
Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And it's vast body bleeds through every vein.

What havock hast thou made, foul monster, sin!
Greatest and first of ills! the fruitful parent
Of woes of all dimensions! But for thee
Sorrow had never been. All-noxious thing,
Of vilest nature! Other sorts of evils
Are kindly circumscrib'd, and have their bounds.
The fierce volcano, from his burning entrails
That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
Involv'd in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
Mars the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
And there it stops. The big-swoln inundation,
Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
Buries whole tracts of country, threat'ning more:
But that too has it's shore it cannot pass.
More dreadful far than those, sin has laid waste,
Not here and there a country, but a world;
Dispatching at a wide extended blow
Entire mankind, and for their sakes defacing
A whole creation's beauty with rude hands;
Blasting the foodful grain, and loaded branches,

And marking all along it's way with ruin!
Accursed thing! O where shall fancy find
A proper name to call thee by, expressive
Of all thy horrors? Pregnant womb of ills!
Of temper so transcendently malign,
That toads and serpents of most deadly kind
Compar'd to thee are harmless! Sickneses,
Of every size and symptom, racking pains,
And bluest plagues, are thine! See how the fiend
Profusely scatters the contagion round!
Whilst deep-mouth'd Slaughter, bellowing at her heels,
Wades deep in blood new-spilt; yet for to-morrow
Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring,
And inly pines till the dread blow is struck.

But hold! I've gone too far; too much discover'd
My father's nakedness and nature's shame.
Here let me pause, and drop an honest tear,
One burst of filial duty and condolence,
O'er all those ample deserts Death hath spread,
This chaos of mankind! O great man-eater!
Whose every day is carnival, not sated yet!
Unheard-of epicure, without a fellow!
The veriest gluttons do not always cram;
Some intervals of abstinence are sought
To edge the appetite; thou seekest none!

Methinks the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,
And thousands that each hour thou gobblest up,
This, less than this, might gorge thee to the full.
But ah! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more;
Like one, whole days defrauded of his meals,
On whom lank Hunger lays her skinny hand,
And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings:
As if Diseases, Massacres, and Poison,
Famine and War, were not thy caterers!

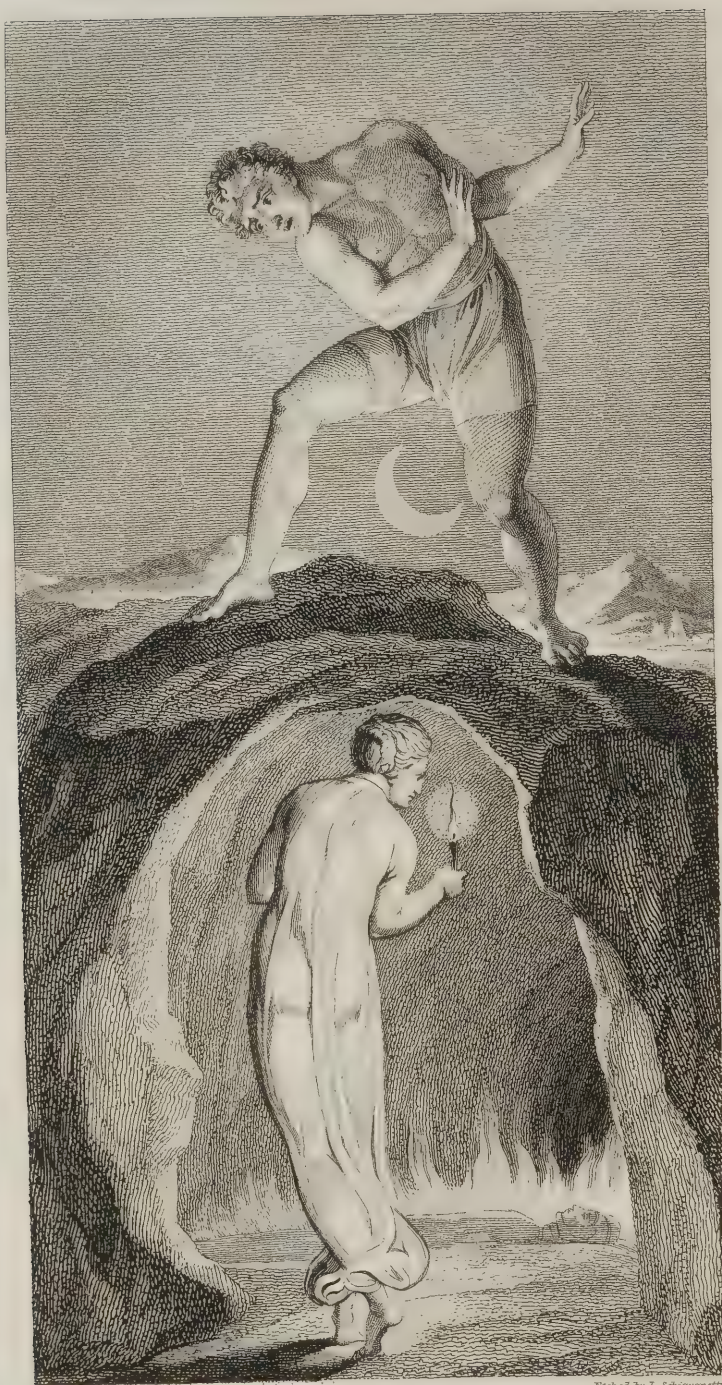
But know that thou must render up the dead,
And with high interest too! they are not thine;
But only in thy keeping for a season,
Till the great promis'd day of restitution;
When loud diffusive sound from brazen trump
Of strong-lung'd cherub shall alarm thy captives,
And rouse the long, long sleepers into life,
Day-light, and liberty.——
Then must thy doors fly open, and reveal
The minds that lay long forming under ground,
In their dark cells immur'd; but now full ripe,
And pure as silver from the crucible,
That twice has stood the torture of the fire,
And inquisition of the forge. We know
Th' illustrious Deliverer of mankind,
The Son of God, thee foil'd. Him in thy power



Designed by W. Blake

The Day of Judgment

London Published May 1790 by Cadell & Davies Strand



Drawn by W. Blake

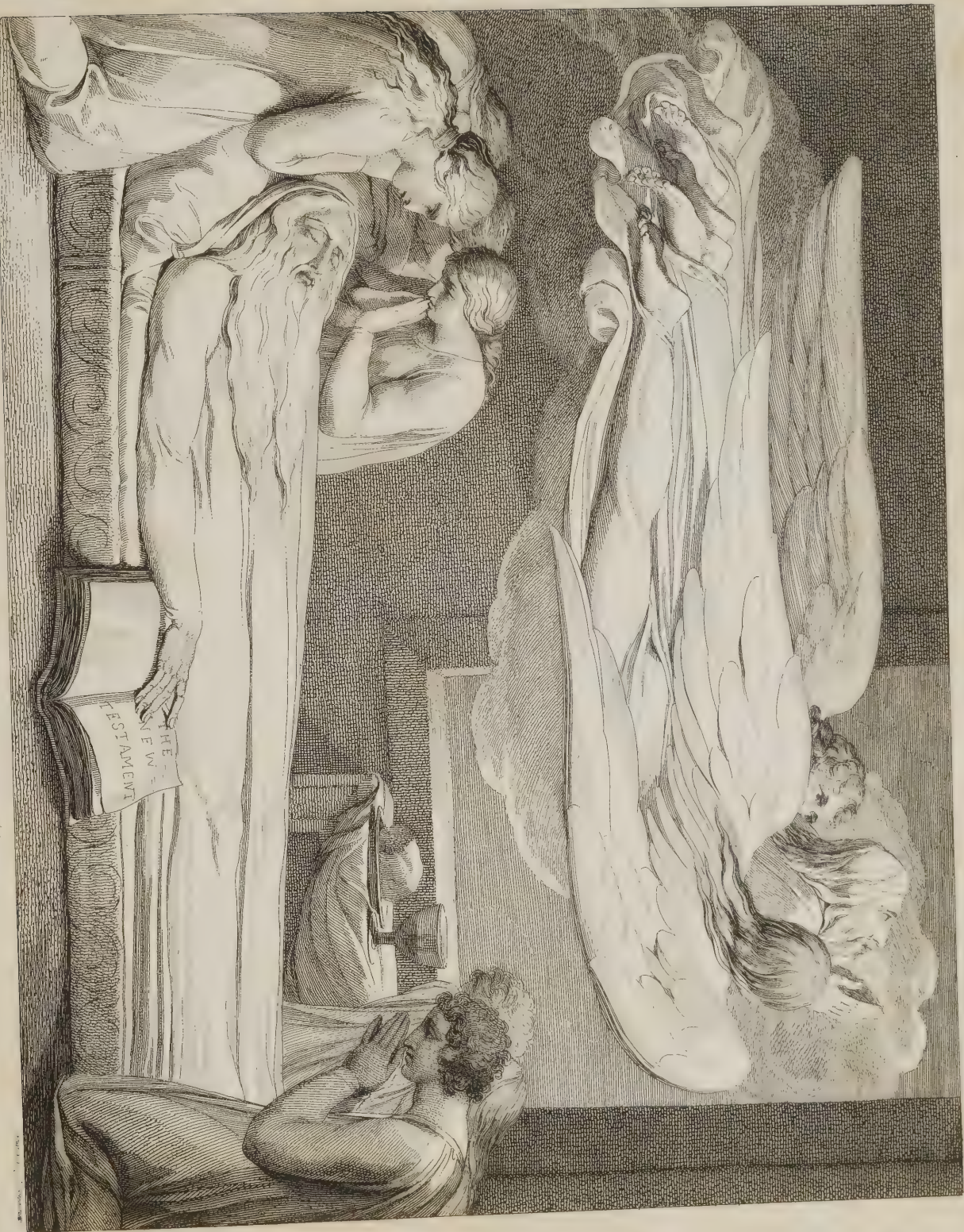
Engraved by J. Schiavonetti

The Soul exploring the recesses of the Grave

London, Published May 1788 by Cadell & Davies Strand

Thou could'st not hold; self-vigorous he rose,
And, shaking off thy fetters, soon retook
Those spoils his voluntary yielding lent :
(Sure pledge of our releasement from thy thrall!)
Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth,
And shew'd himself alive to chosen witnesses,
By proofs so strong, that the most slow assenting
Had not a scruple left. . . This having done,
He mounted up to Heaven. . . Methinks I see him
Climb th' ærial heights, and glide along
Athwart the severing clouds: but the faint eye,
Flung backwards in the chase, soon drops its hold,
Disabled quite, and jaded with pursuing.
Heaven's portals wide expand to let him in;
Nor are his friends shut out: as a great prince
Not for himself alone procures admission,
But for his train; it was his royal will,
That where he is there should his followers be.
Death only lies between, a gloomy path!
Made yet more gloomy by our coward fears!
But nor untrod, nor tedious; the fatigue
Will soon go off. . . Besides, there's no bye-road
To bliss. . . Then why, like ill-condition'd children,
Start we at transient hardships in the way
That leads to purer air and softer skies,
And a ne'er-setting sun? Fools that we are!

We wish to be where sweets unwith'ring bloom;
But straight our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen, upon a summer's ev'n,
Fast by the riv'let's brink, a youngster play:
How wishfully he looks to stem the tide!
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd,
At last he dips his foot; but, as he dips,
His fears redouble, and he runs away
From th' inoffensive stream, unmindful now
Of all the flowers that paint the further bank,
And smil'd so sweet of late. Thrice welcome Death!
That, after many a painful bleeding step,
Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
On the long-wish'd-for shore. Prodigious change!
Our bane turn'd to a blessing! Death disarm'd
Loses its fellness quite; all thanks to him
Who scourg'd the venom out! Sure the last end
Of the good man is peace. How calm his exit!
Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft.
Behold him in the ev'ning-tide of life,
A life well spent, whose early care it was
His riper years should not upbraid his green:
By unperceiv'd degrees he wears away;
Yet like the sun seems larger at his setting!
High in his faith and hopes, look how he reaches



The Death of the Good Old Man.

It is not *When* is *Peace*! How calm His exit!
 When the last end
 London: Published May 27/1846 by Cadell & Davies, Strand.

THE GRAVE.

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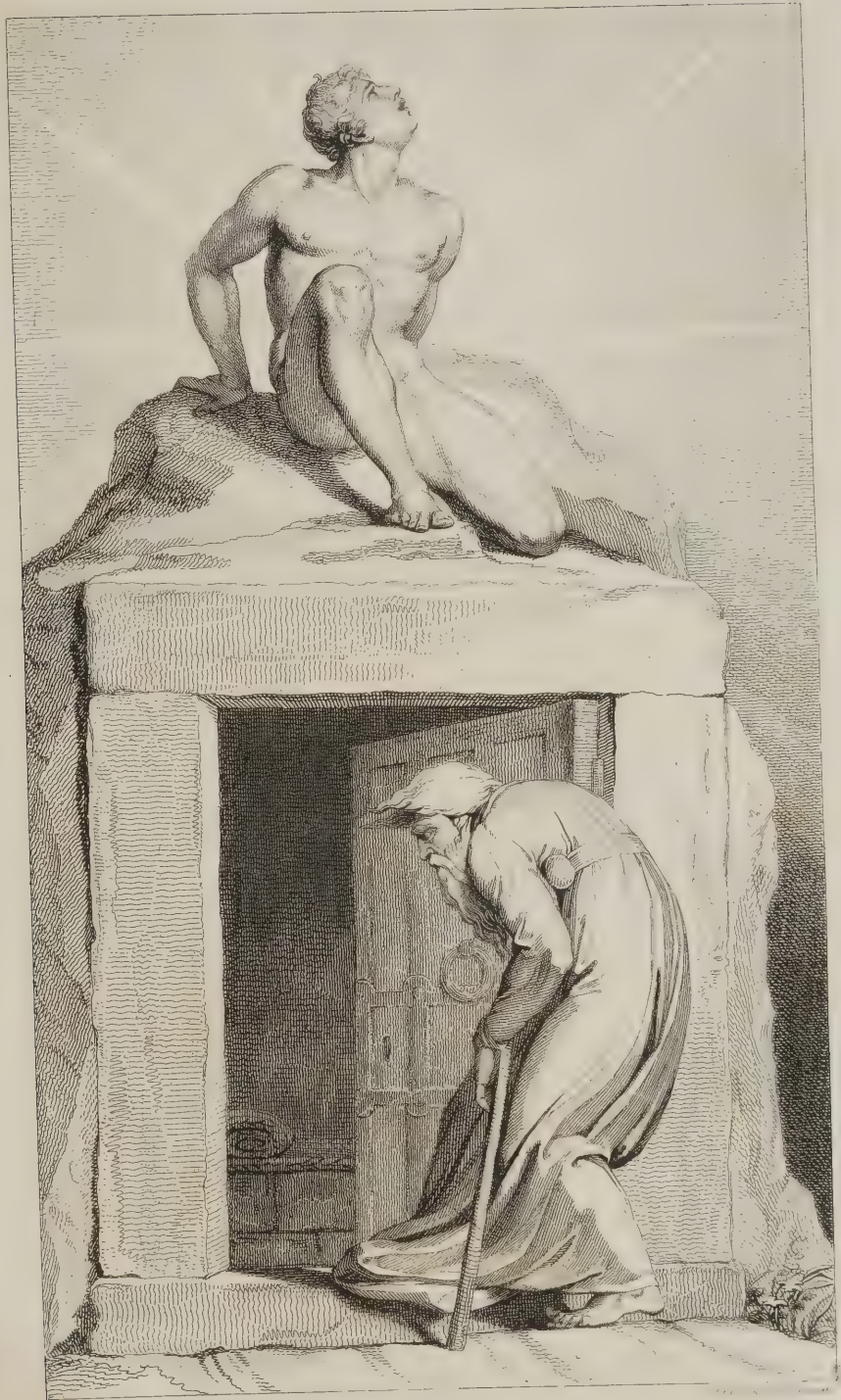
After the prize in view! and, like a bird
That's hamper'd, struggles hard to get away!
Whilst the glad gates of sight are wide expanded
To let new glories in, the first fair fruits
Of the fast-coming harvest! Then—O then
Each earth-born joy grows vile, or disappears,
Shrunk to a thing of nought! O how he longs
To have his passport sign'd, and be dismiss'd!
'Tis done—and now he's happy! The glad soul
Has not a wish uncrown'd. E'en the lag flesh
Rests too in hope of meeting once again
It's better half, never to sunder more.
Nor shall it hope in vain: the time draws on
When not a single spot of burial-earth,
Whether on land or in the spacious sea,
But must give back it's long committed dust
Inviolate: and faithfully shall these
Make up the full account; not the least atom
Embezzled, or mislaid, of the whole tale!
Each soul shall have a body ready furnish'd;
And each shall have his own. Hence, ye profane!
Ask not how this can be? Sure the same power
That rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
Can reassemble the loose scatter'd parts,
And put them as they were. Almighty God
Has done much more; nor is his arm impair'd

Through length of days; and what he can he will :
His faithfulness stands bound to see it done.
When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb'ring dust,
Not unattentive to the call, shall wake;
And every joint possess it's proper place,
With a new elegance of form, unknown
To it's first state. Nor shall the conscious soul
Mistake it's partner; but, amidst the crowd
Singling it's other half, into it's arms
Shall rush, with all th' impatience of a man
That's new come home, and, having long been absent,
With haste runs over every different room,
In pain to see the whole. Thrice happy meeting!
Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more!

'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night;
We make the grave our bed, and then are gone!

Thus at the shut of ev'n, the weary bird
Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake
Cov'rs down, and dozes till the dawn of day;
Then claps his well-fledg'd wings, and bears away.

THE END.

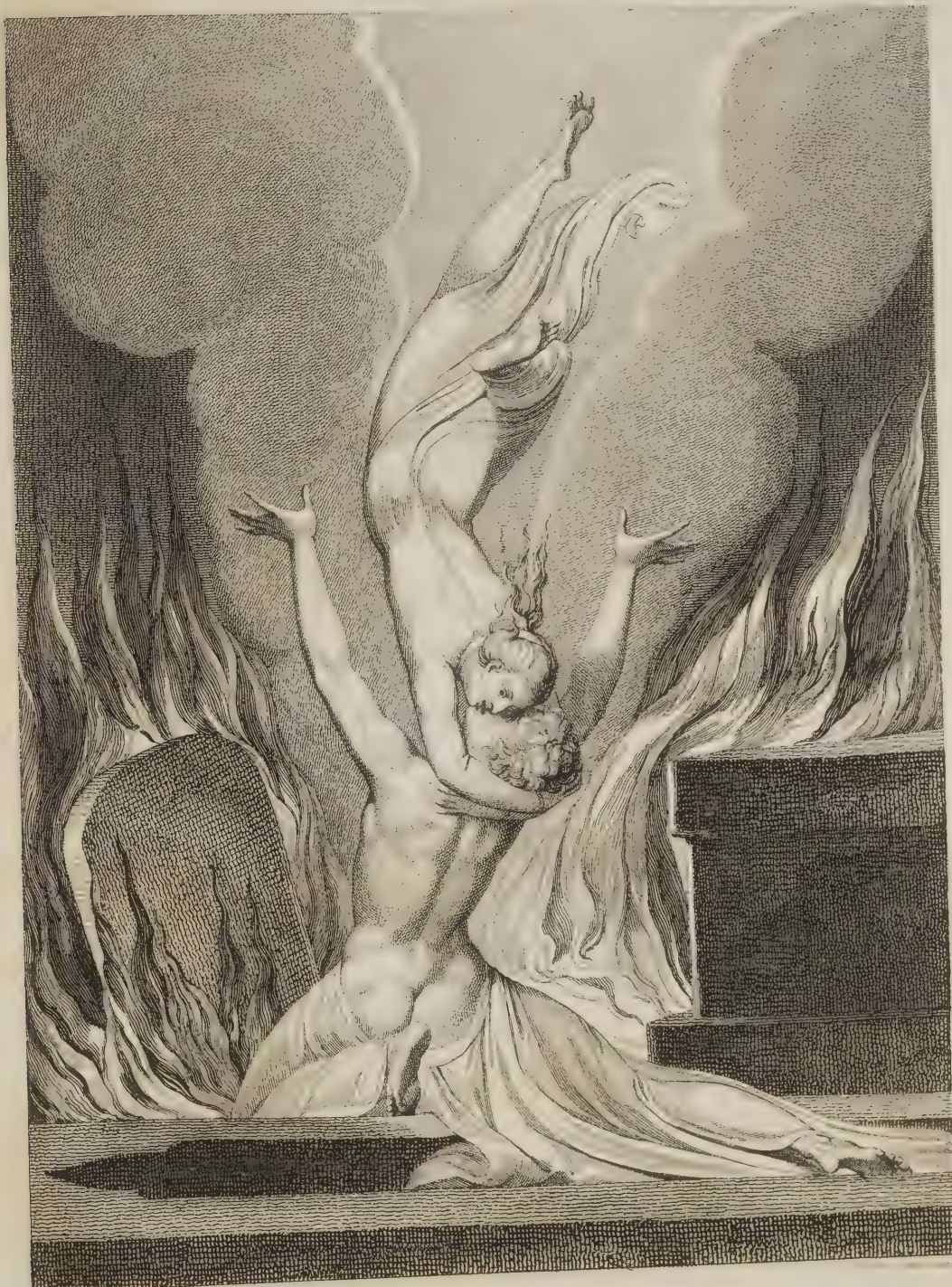


DESIGNED BY W. COOPER.

Death's Door

'Tis but a Night, a long and moonless Night,
We make the Grave our Bed, and then are gone!

London Published May 1841



Engraved by W. G. Smith

The Resurrection of the Soul & the Body

London Published May 1796 by Cadell & Davies, Strand

OF THE DESIGNS.



By the arrangement here made, the regular progression of Man, from his first descent into the Vale of Death, to his last admission into Life eternal, is exhibited. These Designs, detached from the Work they embellish, form of themselves a most interesting Poem.

I. THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO THE GRAVE.

“ Eternal King, whose potent arm sustains
“ The keys of Death and Hell!”

II. THE DESCENT OF MAN INTO THE VALE OF DEATH.

The pious daughter weeping and conducting her sire onward ; age, creeping carefully on hands and knees ; an elder, without friend or kindred ; a miser ; a bachelor, blindly proceeding, no one knows where, ready to drop into the dark abyss ; frantic youth rashly devoted to vice and passion, rushing past the diseased and old, who totters on crutches ; the wan declining virgin ; the miserable and distracted widow ; the hale country youth ; and the mother and her numerous progeny, already arrived in this valley, are among the groups which speak irresistibly to the feelings.

III. DEATH'S DOOR.

The Door opening, that seems to make utter darkness visible; age, on crutches, hurried by a tempest into it. Above is the renovated man seated in light and glory.

IV. THE STRONG AND WICKED MAN DYING.

Extent of limb, a broad capacious chest, heaving in agony, and prodigious muscular force, so exerted as to pourtray the excruciating torments of mind and body, all contribute to give a fearful picture of the Strong and Wicked Man in the pangs of Death. His masculine soul is hurried through the casement in flame, while his daughter hides her face with horror not to be resisted, and his frantic wife rushes forward, as if resolved to share his fate.

V. THE GOOD OLD MAN DYING.

Never perhaps were two subjects more happily conceived, and beautifully contrasted, than this and the former. In that all is confusion, hurry, and terror; in this are perfect repose, beatic hope, and heavenly consolation. Peace in his countenance, his hand on the gospel, his soul devoutly ascending to eternal bliss, his affectionate children, some in prayer, others believing, or at least anxiously hoping, that he still lives; all denote how great is the happiness of the Good Man in the Hour of Death.

VI. THE SOUL HOVERING OVER THE BODY.

“ ————— How wishfully she looks
“ On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!”

VII. THE SOUL EXPLORING THE RECESSES OF THE GRAVE.

The Soul, prior to the dissolution of the Body, exploring through and beyond the tomb, and there discovering the emblems of mortality and of immortality.

VIII. THE COUNSELLOR, KING, WARRIOR, MOTHER, AND CHILD.

All are equal in the Grave. Wisdom, Power, Valour, Beauty, and Innocence, at the hour of death, alike are impotent and unavailing.

IX. THE SKELETON RE-ANIMATED.

“When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb’ring dust,
“Not unattentive to the call, awakes;”

while the world in flames typifies the renovation of all things, the end of Time, and the beginning of Eternity.

X. THE RE-UNION OF SOUL AND BODY.

The Body springs from the grave, the Soul descends from an opening cloud; they rush together with inconceivable energy; they meet, never again to part!

XI. A FAMILY MEETING IN HEAVEN.

The sweet felicity, the endearing tenderness, the ineffable affection, that are here depicted, are sufficiently obvious. The Husband clasps the Wife; the Children embrace; the Boy recognises and eagerly springs to his Father.

XII. THE LAST JUDGMENT.

CHRIST coming to judgment in the clouds of heaven, with the "Thrones set, and the Books opened." On his knees lies the Book of Life. The Recording Angels kneel on each side of his throne, and the Elders are also seated on each side of Him to judge the world. Surrounding the throne, are the blessed, entering into their joy; and arising from these, on each hand, are two clouds of figures: one with the insignia of Baptism; the other with the insignia of the Lord's Supper, inclosing a glorification of angels, with harps. Beneath, on the right hand of Christ, are the blessed, rising in the air to judgment; on the left hand are the cursed: Some are precipitating themselves from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne (among them is Satan, wound round with the Serpent), others are pleading their own righteousness, and others, beneath, fleeing with banners and spears among the rocks, crying to the "rocks to cover them." Beneath these are represented the harlot's mystery, and the dragon, who flee before the face of the Judge. In the centre, standing on the midst of the earth, is the angel with the last trumpet. On each side of him is an angel: that on the left is drawing his sword on the wicked; that on the right is sheathing his sword on the just, who are rising in various groups, with joy and affection, family by family. The angel with the trumpet, and his accompanying ministers of judgment, are surrounded by a column of flame, which spreads itself in various directions over the earth, from which the dead are bursting forth, some in terror, some in joy. On the opening cloud, on each hand of Christ, are two figures, supporting the books of remembrance: that over the just is beheld with humiliation; that over the wicked with arrogance. A sea of fire issues from beneath the throne of Christ, destructive to the wicked, but salutary to the righteous. Before the sea of Fire the clouds are rolled back, and the heavens "are rolled together as a scroll."

IN kindly thanking those Ladies and Gentlemen who have so liberally patronized and befriended the present Work, Mr. CROMEK begs to inform them, that he is the owner of the celebrated Cabinet Picture, painted by Mr. STOTHARD, representing THE PROCESSION OF CHAUCER'S PILGRIMS TO CANTERBURY.

He begs to announce his intention of publishing an Engraving from this interesting composition as speedily as is consistent with the time necessarily required in the execution of so magnificent an undertaking, and respectfully submits to his Subscribers, and to other Amateurs of fine Art, the following Prospectus.

UNDER THE IMMEDIATE PATRONAGE OF

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES.

THE

PROCESSION

OF

CHAUCER'S PILGRIMS

TO

CANTERBURY.

PROPOSALS FOR PUBLISHING, BY SUBSCRIPTION,

A PRINT,

FROM THE WELL-KNOWN CABINET PICTURE ON THAT SUBJECT,

By THOMAS STOTHARD, ESQ. R. A.

TO BE EXECUTED IN THE LINE MANNER OF ENGRAVING, AND IN THE SAME
EXCELLENT STYLE AS THE PORTRAIT OF MR. WILLIAM BLAKE,
PREFIXED TO THIS WORK,

By LOUIS SCHIAVONETTI, Esq. V. A.

THE GENTLEMAN WHO HAS ETCHED THE PRINTS THAT AT ONCE ILLUSTRATE AND
EMBELLISH THE PRESENT VOLUME.

PROSPECTUS.

‘ Dan Chaucer—grete him wel!’

THE reputation of Chaucer, the reformer of the English language, and the father of English poetry, may, without presumption, be thought to justify the Proprietor in presenting the Public with a work designed to bring together, in one point of view, and to represent, in their true forms, living features, and adventitious appendages, all the characters of the Canterbury Tales. These Tales are the most pleasing of Chaucer's Works. It is the characters which are described in the *general Prologue* to them which Mr. Stothard has now transferred to the Canvas; and with so much truth and sprightliness, and in a manner so agreeable, that the Poet's humour may, with truth, be said to be revived in the Painter.

It is the particular merit of this Piece, that the Story is immediately brought home to the Spectator. He becomes instantly one of the group, and sees them move before him, marked by their distinctive habits, characters, and sensations, in the same manner as Chaucer has drawn them. The idea of the Poet is impressed at the first view,—a humour unforced, agreeable, and comic; a *pleasurable Tour*, sanctified by the name of *Pilgrimage*. The covert ridicule on these eccentric excursions, which Chaucer intended, is very happily preserved in his Face; the quiet indifference of one of the Monks, the hypocrisy of another, and the real piety of a third, are with equal excellency pourtrayed. The gay levity of the *Wife of Bath*, and the countenance of the *old Ploughman*, worn down with age and labour, are finely rendered. The Miller is an admirable character; and his Horse is as much in character as himself. *The Fop of Chaucer's Age* is exhibited as making a display of his riding; and *the Sea Captain* bestrides his Nag with the usual awkwardness of the Sailor. The pale and studious countenance of the Oxford Scholar; the stateliness of the Lady-Abbess; the facetiousness and homely humour of the Host, as contrasted with the Serjeant at Law, and the Doctor of Physic;—all these peculiarities of character are very finely and delicately expressed. The costume of each Person is correct with an antiquarian exactness; * and the whole Group is so well distributed, that each character is sufficiently seen, and in his due place.

The Scene of the Picture is laid in that part of the road to Canterbury which commands a view of the Dulwich Hills—the Time, a beautiful and serene May Morning. The Pilgrims are grouped with a decorum suited to their respective characters, and in the order

* Mr. Douce, in his admirable ‘*Illustrations of Shakespeare, and of ancient Manners*,’ speaking of the zeal which manifests itself among the leading Artists of the present day to obtain correct notions of the manners of former times whenever they have occasion to depict them, observes, that ‘Mr. Stothard, with every claim to superior talent, has recently finished a Painting of the Procession of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims, which may be classed among the choicest morsels of its kind. The attention to accuracy of costume which it displays has never been exceeded, and but very seldom so well directed.’ Vol. II. p. 285.

PROSPECTUS.

in which we may suppose Chaucer himself to have seen them, headed by the Miller, playing upon his pipe, under the guidance of *Harry Baillie, the Host*; who, as Master of the Ceremonies, is represented standing in his stirrups, in the act of commanding attention to the proposal he is about to make, of drawing lots to determine which of the company shall tell the first Tale. Near to him is a line of five characters—the *Knight*; the *Franklin*, or Country Gentleman; the *Serjeant at Law*, the *Merchant*, and the *Doctor of Physic*. The *Young Squire* is mounted on a White Horse near the Knight, and betwixt these two figures is seen the *Reve* or Steward. Close behind the Squire, his *Yeoman* advances, habited in green. The front of the next Group is also composed of five characters—the *Lady Abbess*; her *Nun*; the *Nun's Priest*; the *Good Parson*; and his Brother, the *Ploughman*. The figures immediately behind the Lady Abbess are, the *Shipman*; the *Oxford Scholar*; the *Manciple*, and Chaucer himself.* Next, mounted upon an ambling Nag, approaches the *Wife of Bath*, heading a group of four figures:—She is represented in brisk conversation with the *Monk* and the *Friar*; behind them are the *Pardoner*, dressed in blue, and his friend the *Sompnour*, in white.

The last group of this motley Cavalcade is composed of the *Goldsmith*, the *Weaver*, the *Haberdasher*, the *Dyer*, and the *Tapestry Merchant*, all citizens of London, attended by their *Cook*: with these jolly Pilgrims the Procession closes.

In justice to the subject before us, the Painter ought to possess all the powers of description and embellishment; all the satire, the genuine humour, the knowledge of life and manners, for each of which the original is so eminently distinguished. The Proprietor of this undertaking finds it difficult to express his own and the general sense of Mr Stothard's qualifications, without violating that admirable Artist's known reserve and modesty of nature. He cannot, however, resist the gratification of transcribing a letter which appeared in the periodical paper called 'The Artist,' addressed to Richard Cumberland, Esq. the celebrated Dramatic Writer, by Mr. Hoppner, a gentleman who is himself of the first eminence in his professional capacity of an Historical and Portrait Painter.

TO RICHARD CUMBERLAND, ESQ.

Dear Sir,

May 30, 1807.

You desire me to give you some account of the Procession of Chaucer's Pilgrims, painted by Stothard, and the task is a pleasant one; for the praise called forth by the merits of a living artist, from a rival in the pursuit of fame, is, I feel, like mercy, twice blessed—

'It bleaseth him that gives, and him that takes.'

The Painter has chosen that moment for his Picture when the Pilgrims may be supposed to have disengaged themselves from the multitude that bustle in the environs of a great metropolis, and are collected together by Harry Baillie, their guide and host. The scene is therefore laid

* The Portrait of Chaucer is painted from that in the British Museum, done by Thomas Occleve, who lived in his time, and was his scholar.

PROSPECTUS.

in that part of their road from London that commands a view of the Dulwich hills, where, it may be supposed, the Host could, without fear of interruption, proclaim his proposal of drawing lots, to determine who should tell the first tale. He is represented standing in his stirrups, and appears to exult in the plan he has formed for their mutual entertainment. You see the group gently pacing forward—all are in motion,—yet too well satisfied with each other to be eager for their journey's end. The features of each individual are touched with the most happy discrimination of character, and prove the Painter to have studied the human heart with as much attention, and not less successfully, than the Poet.

This intelligent group is rendered still more interesting by the charm of colouring, which, though simple, is strong, and most harmoniously distributed throughout the picture. The landscape has a deep-toned brightness, that accords most admirably with the figures: and the painter has ingeniously contrived to give a value to a common scene and very ordinary forms, that would hardly be found, by unlearned eyes, in the natural objects. He has expressed too, with great vivacity and truth, the freshness of morning, at that season, when Nature herself is most fresh and blooming—the Spring; and it requires no great stretch of fancy to imagine we perceive the influence of it on the cheeks of the Fair Wife of Bath, and her rosy companions, the Monk and Friar.

In respect of the execution of the various parts of this pleasing design, it is not too much praise to say, that it is wholly free from that vice which painters term manner; and it has this peculiarity beside, which I do not remember to have seen in any picture ancient or modern, that it bears no mark of the period in which it was painted, but might very well pass for the work of some able artist of the time of Chaucer. This effect is not, I believe, the result of any association of ideas connected with the costume, but appears in a primitive simplicity, and the total absence of all affectation, either of colour or pencilling.

Having attempted to describe a few of the beauties of this captivating performance, it remains only for me to mention one great defect—The picture is, notwithstanding appearances, a modern one. But if you can divest yourself of the general prejudice that exists against contemporary talents, you will see a work that would have done honour to any school, at any period.

I am, Dear Sir, &c. &c.

JOHN HOPPNER.

CONDITIONS OF SUBSCRIPTION.

The Picture is 3 Feet 1 Inch long, and 1 Foot high. The Print will be executed exactly of the same size. The Price of the Prints will be Three Guineas; Proof Impressions, Five Guineas.—Gentlemen who wish to possess this Engraving, are requested to forward their address to Mr. Cromek, No. 64, Newman Street, London; and, as the number of Proof Prints will be limited, an early application is indispensable.

The Purchasers of this Print are respectfully informed, that it will receive a considerably increased value from the circumstance of being enriched with an engraved Portrait of Mr. Stothard, executed by Mr. Schiavonetti, in the same style of excellence as the subject itself, from a capital original Picture, painted by John Hoppner, Esq. R. A. and by that Gentleman obligingly contributed for this purpose.

T. Bensley, Printer,
Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London.

